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ABSTRACT

Since the learning of a foreign language is the key to the intellectual, artistic and literary riches of a nation, its value in general education is undeniable. The aims of the presently advocated Asian language programs lie in the concept of applying modern linguistics and cross-cultural studies to the planning of foreign language teaching programs. The two-year Asian language programs will be composed of a Pre-Speech Phase and an Active Phase, and will feature regular proficiency examinations. The lessons will be contextually based, experimentally relevant, and culturally informative. The personnel will consist of a professorial coordinator trained in aural-oral methodology and cross-cultural studies, and native master-drillers for the languages being taught. Close international cooperation is advocated for Asian language teaching centers to exchange ideas, specialists, and study teams. (Author/AMM)

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Problems of Establishing Low-Enrollment Asian Language Programs

by Nguyen Dang Liem, University of Hawaii

ASPAC 70 Conference, Mexico, June 24-27, 1970

1. Importance of Asian language teaching and learning
2. Aims in establishing Asian language programs
3. Techniques
4. Staffing low-enrollment Asian language programs
5. Cooperation between Universities

1.

When in many American university campuses the students want to see foreign language requirements abolished, the language teacher[1] cannot help but wonder whether he really has a lot to offer to the education of younger generations, as he used to believe.[2] The more he thinks about his professional contributions, the more he is convinced that the teaching and learning of foreign languages is of great importance both in a country which needs an international language or lingua franca for internal communication[3] and mass communication as is the case with many multilingual countries,[4] and in one where an international language like English or Spanish is already spoken by the majority of the people.[5] Since one of the major roles of language is the expression of a culture,[6] the learning of a foreign language is the key to the intellectual, artistic, and literary riches of another nation, its value in general education is therefore undeniable.[7] Furthermore, in view of the fact that a Western country has a vital interest in keeping abreast of international culture, and in having good communication with the Eastern world, the knowledge of one

AL 002 377

or more Asian languages by a large segment of its population is an important factor in the educational, social, diplomatic, and even economic development of that nation. In fact, there are at least two communication needs to be recognized here: Being unable to practice isolationism in the present world, a Western nation has urgent need for social, economic, and psychological understanding of the Eastern hemisphere. Further, it ought to establish effective channels of communication with other nations. Perhaps one can argue that, in international diplomacy, it is the weaker and poorer nation that has to learn the language of the stronger,[8] but experience tells us over and over again that that is not the ideal case. International communication just like interpersonal relations should be a give-and-take situation.

Because second language learning is an important factor in national education, and because a knowledge of an Eastern language is the key to better understanding and appreciation of that part of the world, it is hoped that the teaching of Asian languages becomes more and more widespread in Western countries.[9] In order to make that expansion possible, means have to be found to enable universities and colleges to offer a maximal number of Asian language programs at minimal cost, and consequently to enable the students to choose the Asian language or languages they prefer to learn or that is or are most useful to their special fields of interest. It is the purpose of the present paper to point out and try to solve the problems of establishing low-enrollment Asian language programs and to review the aims and techniques of foreign language teaching and learning, the personnel involved, and the necessity of cooperation between universities and

colleges involved in the matter.

2.

The aims of the presently advocated Asian language programs lie in the concept of applying modern linguistics to the teaching of foreign languages.[10]

The central idea of this concept of applied linguistics is the important role of the native language in foreign language learning.[11] Each language has its own sound system and grammatical structure. The foreign language learner has already learned his native language extensively enough to grasp and express a variety of experiences and he can never again be in the same position as a child learning his own language. He tends to transfer into the language to be learned those habits of sound-production and word-order that are particular to his native language.[12] This transfer produces a distortion in the foreign language which will only be eradicated when the learner has adapted his speech habits to those of the people whose language he is learning.[13]

Another important aspect of the concept is that it states that the mastery of a language does not consist of knowing all the words in the language. The main problem in learning a foreign language, then, is not primarily that of acquiring vocabulary items - a process which accompanies our experience and takes time. It is first the mastery of the pronunciation (to be able to understand the stream of speech, to recognize the different sounds, and to pronounce them in an acceptable way to the native speaker) and the grammar (the features of forms and arrangements of which the foreign language makes use to signal its various layers of meaning). Once the phonological and grammatical features have become automatic habits - within a

limited vocabulary - the student can expand his knowledge of new words.

If they are only to enable the student to master the pronunciation and grammar of the language to be learned, our aims in Asian language teaching are not comprehensive, because the main objective of all foreign language learning is to achieve an understanding as complete as possible between people of different linguistic backgrounds.[14] In order to arrive at that aim, the student of language has to learn the culture or cultures of the people speaking the language he is learning, for language is closely related to culture.[15] Since the meanings expressed in a language are culturally determined to a large extent,[16] one cannot understand the language fully without understanding at least the distinctive cultural meanings expressed through it. Thus the foreign language student cannot go far into the language to be learned without facing differences in cultural meanings.[17] He needs to have substantial knowledge of specific facts concerning the culture, some understanding of the main patterns of thought, beliefs, and traditions, and some appreciation of the values that account for the way the people of that culture live and behave.[18] He must be able to recognize the significance of the accomplishments of the people. He must learn the way the people eat, drink, exercise; how they cater to their personal (artistic, social, or educational) or religious needs.

3.

With the aims of teaching language (pronunciation, grammar, limited vocabulary and some reading at the beginning[19]), and of creating in the student's mind a potential for comprehension and appreciation[20] of of the culture of the people whose language he is learning, the techniques

feature experience-based, intensive instruction and research, with emphasis on the applied uses of the foreign language to be learned in true-to-life situations.[21]

The advocated Asian language course is a two-year program. It has a Pre-Speech Phase and an Active Phase.[22] The Pre-Speech Phase aims at acquainting the student with the characteristic features of the grammar,[23] which is presented, along with pronunciation problems, in a set of drills[24] and appropriate explanations. Each drill incorporates one thought within a very short dialogue (4 to 6 sentences). Each dialogue is brief enough so that the student can retain the whole thought as a unit. In fact, this is one of the most important aspects of these drills; the student must focus on the whole of the dialogue rather than isolate words or sentences.[25] The drills are to test the student's hearing of the significant sounds, his understanding of the grammatical forms and his ability to comprehend the meaning of utterances. The dialogues are also short enough to be memorized, each presenting only one new "point" of grammar. The Pre-Speech Phase range anywhere between two to ten weeks depending on the particular language being learned, and its second half is superseded by the beginning of the Active Phase where the student will actually produce utterances himself. In the Active Phase, the lessons are also contextually based and experientially relevant.[26] Each lesson will include a dialogue and grammar drills (substitutional, expansional, transformational, or question-answer types).[27] The experiential techniques are to let the student act out the dialogue and go through the drills, not automatically but with his interest vested in the vocabulary relevant to real life.[28] Since the use of language calls for the contribution of the whole personality,[29] the class should be the "scene of various

activities.[30] It should be a "society in miniature"[31] where each student is a living, experiencing, and active person, and not just a receptor of the content of the course.[32]

A special feature of the program is a series of regular proficiency examinations which offer the student the opportunity to know well he is doing.[33] The major proficiency testing techniques proposed are the Foreign Service Institute (Department of State of the U.S.) procedure for determining actual functional control of the language being learned for communication and work purposes.[34] The curriculum will feature a balanced combination of inductive acquisition of communication skills (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency) with analytical study of the structure of the language. This balance will be maintained at a ratio of approximately 80 to 20 percent respectively. Visual skills will be stressed, but from a strong aural-oral base.[35]

4.

Since, on the one hand, the setting of a program offering a variety of Asian languages with professorial staff for each language is too expensive for small colleges and universities to afford, and, on the other hand, the teaching and learning of these languages is so important, especially in campuses offering Asian study-oriented courses, that a new staffing device should be applied. In the proposed program, native speakers of Asian languages, who preferably are also students of language-oriented fields at the particular campus, will be employed as language instructors or drillers.[36] A coordinator, who must be trained and experienced in the field of intensive aural-oral methodology, including program design, staff training, and overall supervision,[37]

will be employed as the professorial faculty member in charge of the courses. The professorial coordinator will then be able to participate in the inductive aspect of the courses, and direct the cognitive-informational aspect of the courses on as many as five different Asian languages, since his part will only be one fifth in each course. Thanks to the availability of linguistically oriented analyses[38] of many major Asian languages,[39] the coordinator can rely on them for his explanations,[40] and he does not have to be an expert in each of the languages being taught.[41] Nevertheless, he should be able to direct the preparation of supplementary materials and tape-recordings by the native language master drillers. He should also be able to guide the students' reading in different Asian cultures as well as direct the preparation of cultural video tapes and study cases for cross-cultural training purposes.

5.

With all the variety in pronunciation, grammar, culture, and literature of an Asian language, in some cases spoken by hundreds of millions of people, the Western student has a task that is not easy, but which is at the same time rewarding, because it opens the door to one of the richest heritages of thought, and experience of the human race. The important work of teaching Asian languages as foreign languages in the Western world calls for intensive research in pedagogy, linguistics, and cross-cultural studies. Close international cooperation is needed to enable Asian language teaching and research centers to exchange ideas, specialists and study teams with other similar organizations throughout the world.

In this connection, may I personally congratulate the Centro

de Estudios Orientales of the Colegio de Mexico for having generously hosted the ASPAC 70 Conference, a necessary opportunity for us to get together and exchange ideas. I am most pleased to meet my colleagues from other universities and colleges. It is also pertinent to cite the existing excellent records on international cooperation by the Colegio de Mexico, and other Mexican Educational Institutions in the Association for Asian Studies, and the Inter-American Program in Linguistics and Language Teaching, to mention only some of the organizations which are directly relevant to our concern in Problems of Teaching Asian Languages today. To native speakers of Asian languages among the audience, may I say that Asian language teaching will offer them a rewarding experience, and to the enthusiastic young Western students, may I confirm that it will be a promising career.

Footnotes

1
The speaker has prepared a series of English textbooks for Vietnamese, a series of Vietnamese textbooks for English speakers, and a series of six volumes entitled "A Contrastive Analysis of English and Vietnamese", which is in different stages of publication or preparation at the Australian National University (Pacific Linguistics, Canberra.) He has participated in the training of teachers and the supervision of the teaching of eleven Asian languages at the Asia Training Center of the University of Hawaii. He has had the opportunity to see something of the preparation and also the use of language training materials in the Foreign Service of the U.S. Department of State and in the Peace Corps Training Center of the University of Hawaii.

2
At the University of Hawaii Hilo Campus, a fresh approach to higher education in the State of Hawaii has recently been adopted. Relevant to this paper are, on the one hand, the elimination of a foreign language requirement, and, on the other, the creation of a three-tract foreign language program. The program gives the student the option of the conventional two-year course, a one-year conventional-cultural approach, or, for those who want to use it in their careers, an accelerated Japanese program which will yield intermediate proficiency in one year or less. The accelerated course uses methods developed by the old Peace Corps Training Center (nowadays the Center for Cross-Cultural Training and Resea ch) and headed by Dale P. Crowley.

3
For further information about language situations in multilingual countries, see Joshua A. Fishman (ed.) Language Problems of Developing Nations. New York: Wiley, 1968.

4
For further detail on the role of foreign language teaching and learning in Asia and Africa, see Franc A. Rice (ed.), Study of the Role of Second Languages in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Washington D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1962.

5
For information about the role of foreign language learning in national education, see The Teaching of Modern Languages, Report on the UNESCO Regional Seminar Held in Sydney, Australia, January-February, 1957. Australian National Advisory Committee for Unesco.

6
For the relationship between language and culture, see, for example, Dell Hymes (ed.) Language in Culture and Society. New York: Harper, 1964. The concept of language as closely related to culture was systematized by Benjamen Lee Whorf (Language, Thought, and Reality, edited by John B. Carroll. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1956), and by Edward Sapir (Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture, and Personality, edited by D. G. Mandelbaum. Berkeley and Los Angeles: UC Press, 1949. It was later consolidated by Kenneth L. Pike (Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior. Glendale, 1954, 1955, and 1960.)

7
See, for example, Second Language Learning as a Factor in the National Development in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; Summary Statement and Recommendations of an International Meeting of Specialists Held in London, December, 1960. Washington D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1961.

8
The National Development Education Act of 1958 merits to be praised for itsrecognition of the importance of language teaching and learning in the United States.

9
Since World War II, the expansion of foreign language teaching in the Western hemisphere is worth being noticed.

10
The concept of applying modern linguistics to the teaching of foreign languages has been systematized mainly by the late Charles C. Fries (Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language. Ann Arbor: UM Press, 1945), and by Robert Lado (Linguistics Across Cultures.) Ann Arbor: UM Press, 1957.) For further detail on the history of applied linguistics, see for examples, William G. Moulton "Linguistics and Language Teaching in the United States", pp.82-109, in C. Mohrmann, A. Sommerfelt, and J. Whatmough (ed.) Trends in European and American Linguistics. Utrecht: Spectrum, 1962, or Carleton T. Hodge, "The Influence of Linguistics on Language Teaching", Anthropological Linguistics. 5.50-58 (1963).

11
David W. Reed, Robert Lado, and Yao Shen, "The Importance of the Native Language in Foreign Language Learning", in Selected Articles from Language Learning, Series I. Ann Arbor: UM Press 1953, pp.121-7.

12
The concept of transfer in foreign language learning gives birth to contrastive linguistics. For examples, see the series of contrastive volumes of English and the five languages most commonly taught in the U.S. (French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish) prepared under the general supervision of Charles F. Ferguson. Chicago and London: U. of Chicago Press. For a contrastive analysis of an Asian language and English, see, for eample, "A Contrastive Analysis of English and Vietnamese" by the speaker. Canberra: The ANU (Pacific Linguistics), 1966, 1967, 1969, and forthcoming.

13
See, for example, Eugene A. Nida, Learning a Foreign Language. Ann Arbor: Friendship Press, 1957.

14
Albert H. Marckwardt says: "Just so, it may be reasonably maintained that contrastive cultural analyses are equally important in terms of language study", ('The Cultural Preparation of the Teacher of English as a Foreign Language', in Selected Articles from Language Learning No. 2. Ann Arbor: UM Press, 1963, pp.1-4.

15
In 1871, Sir Edward Taylor, in his book Primitive Cultures, defined culture as "...the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Preprinted in The Origins of Culture. New York: Harper Torch Book, 1958.

16
William Bright 'Toward a Cultural Grammar', pp.135-54, Working Papers

in Linguistics. Honolulu: UH Linguistics Department, Volume 2, No. 2, 1970, offers a technique for culture studies.

17

Robert Politzer says "If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning; for unless he receives cultural instruction, he will associate Amarican concepts or objects with the foreign symbols." (Georgetown University Report of the Fifth Annual Round Table Meeting in Linguistics and Language Teaching. New York: Brooks, 1964. Pp.100-101.)

18

For a cross-cultural training technique, see, for example, James F. Downs, Fables, Fancies and Failures in Cross-Cultural Training. Trends Vol. 2 No. 3. Hilo: Peace Corps Training Program, 1969.

19

For a study on the results of a language training program, see Dale P. Crowley, Learning the Hard Way about Language Learning. Trends Vol. 1 No. 2. Hilo: Peace Corps Training Program, 1968.

20

For the design of a cross-cultural training program, see Roger Harrison and Richard L. Hopkins, 'The Design of Cross-Cultural Training: an Alternative to the University Model', Journal of Applied Behavioral Science Vol. III (4).

21

The speaker is most endebted to Dale P. Crowley, of the Center for Cross-Cultural Training and Research and the Hilo Campus of the University of Hawaii, for explaining to him the teaching techniques the latter uses at these two Institutions. The influence of Crowley on his thinking is omnipresent in this paper.

22

The speaker acknowledges his endebtedness to Carleton T. Hodge, whose idea that "A basic course consists of two parts, a pre-speech phase and an active phase" ('BC = PC + AP', in Language Sciences. Bloomington, December, 1968. No. 3, pp.17-20.) is borrowed here.

23

E. Picazo de Murray says "Language is a skill, and skill is the result of habit" ('Teaching Spanish in Mexico to Students from the U.S.', p.53. in The Teaching of Modern Languages (Proceedings of Unesco seminar in Ceylon, 1953) (Amsterdam: Drukkerij, 1955)).

24

J. H. Cooper et al say: "The key to language learning is (well planned and lively) drill, drill, drill." (Methods and Techniques for Teaching English. Washington D.C. English Language Services, n.d., p.9.)

25

See Earl W. Stevick,'UHF and the microwaves in transmitting', Language Learning: The Individual and the Process, edited by Edward W. Najam and Carleton T. Hodge, pp.84-94. IJAL 3.2.1. Part II.

26

Fr. Closset says: "A pupil tends to remember only what he actually experienced and what is in harmony with his personality" ('Adolescents and Modern Languages', in The Teaching of Modern Languages (Proceedings of Unesco seminar in Ceylon, 1953), (Amsterdam: Drukkerij, 1955)).

27

For more information about the experiential technique, see Cross-Cultural Training, A Draft Handbook. Estes Park, Colorado: Center for Research and Education, May, 1969.

28

W. A. Bennett says: "The use of language calls for the contribution of the whole personality" (Aspects of Language and Language Teaching. London: Cambridge University Press, 1968, p.71.)

29

Earl W. Stevick, in 'B + VSP, or After BC + PS + AP, What', in Language Sciences, No. 6, August, 1969, pp.9-10, defines his formula as:

"3. Other things being equal, the benefit B derived from a language course is proportional to some power x of the number of words learned. Write this with capital V for vocabulary.

4. Other things being equal, the benefit derived from a language course is proportional to some power y of the number of structures mastered. Write this as capital S: $x\ y$

$$B = V\ S$$

... 5. Other things being equal, the benefit is also dependent on the power P of the teaching: $x\ y\ z$

$$B = V\ S\ P$$

...What has not been so often remembered is that f ("force relative to the student's personality") is also a variable."

The speaker is indebted to Stevick, whose ideas in the mentioned paper are adopted here.

30

31 Closset, "Adolescents"

R. Valnir C. Chagas, Didatica Especial de Língua Modernas. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1957), p.337.

32

Stevick, ibid., p.9, quotes "the teaching of a language should be considered more as imparting of a skill than as th e provision of information..." from the Report of Seminar on the Methodology of Language Teaching, p. 50.

33

For different methods of language testing, see Foreign Language Testing. Centre for Information on Language Teaching. Specialised Bibliography 1. London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching, November, 1969.

34

For the FSI testing techniques, see Frank A. Rice, "The Foreign Service Institute Test Language Proficiency," in Linguistic Reporter 1.2.4.

35

Dale P. Crowley is applying the teaching techniques, which he also devised, in his intensive prpgram of Japanese at the Hilo Campus of the University of Hawaii.

36

The drill masters should normally be native speakers of the language being taught, because the students have to imitate them in all aspects of language and culture learning. Furthermore, the drill masters should be able to write supplementary excercises under the linguistically oriented supervision of the professorial coordinator.

37

Even when basic course are written in the most enlightened way, the frustration remains that "the language teacher is not likely to find a textbook adjusted to his needs", W. A. Bennett, Aspects of Language and Language Teaching, p.108. Therefore, the coordinator should be able to direct the preparation of supplementary materials.

38

The coordinator can refer to the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center Clearing House for Linguistics) Bulletin regularly published by the Center for Applied Linguistics to find the linguistic materials he needs.

39

The Survey of Materials in the Neglected Languages, Part I, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1968, is a good bibliographic document to have.

40

Birgit A. Blass, Dora E. Johnson, and William W. Gage, A Provisional Survey of Materials for the Study of Neglected Languages, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1969.

41

For Chinese and Japanese languages, the speaker recommends the Chinese volumes prepared by John DeFrancis, and the Japanese volumes prepared by John Young et al:

Beginning Chinese (Revised Edition), Yale, 1963.
Intermediate Chinese, Yale, 1964.
Advanced Chinese, Yale, 1966.
Character Text for Beginning Chinese, Yale, 1965.
Character Text for Intermediate Chinese, Yale, 1966.
Character Text for Advanced Chinese, Yale, 1966.
Intermediate Chinese Reader (2 volumes), Yale, 1967.
Beginning Chinese Reader (2 volumes), Yale, 1966.
Advanced Chinese Reader, Yale, 1968.

Learn Japanese Pattern Approach, Volumes I-IV, University of Maryland, 1963-64.

John Young's series Learn Korean Pattern Approach, Volumes I-IV, University of Mariland, 1963-64, is also equally recommended for a Korean language program.

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SUMMARY

1. Since the learning of a foreign language is the key to intellectual, artistic, and literary riches of a nation, its value in general education is undeniable.

2. The aims of the presently advocated Asian language programs lie in the concept of applying modern linguistics and cross-cultural studies to the planning of foreign language teaching programs.

3. The two-year Asian language programs will be composed of a Pre-Speech Phase and an Active Phase, and will feature regular proficiency examinations. The lessons will be contextually based, experimentally relevant, and culturally informative.

4. The personnel will consist of a professorial coordinator trained in aural-oral methodology and cross-cultural studies, and native master-drillers for the languages being taught.

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AL 002 377